

May 17, 2024

The Honorable Paul G. Gardephe,

My dad is my hero. I know most kids can say the same but my dad is a literal hero. He saves lives every single day. As a radiologist he is the doctor's doctor, finding things hidden within the body that clinicians cannot detect. He has an eagle eye and a sharp mind, a combination he inherited from his father and one I like to think has been passed on to me, as a third generation radiologist. As a child I would force myself to stay awake when I knew my dad was on-call, and when I heard his pager go off, I would jump out of my bedroom and insist I come along. Walking through the hospital hallways with my dad, I always felt like I was with the most important person in the world. He knew everyone by first name from the security guard to the custodian. He would bring leftover homemade dinner for the staff working overnight and he always knew what was going on in all of their lives. We would sit with the on-call residents and rotating medical students and review the emergent films. Even though it was late at night, he always took the time to explain the findings and highlight the teaching points of the case. Watching my dad in action back then inspired me to become a physician.

There are so many other stories that solidified my desire to follow in my dad's footsteps. Many times we would be driving on a highway, and suddenly get stuck in traffic due to an accident ahead. I remember vividly how my dad would leave us in the car with my mom to run up to the scene of the accident and ask if the EMTs needed help, or he would do what he could until the ambulance arrived. He was always the first person to run to help someone choking in a restaurant, on an airplane, or in our synagogue.

A few months ago, a colleague of mine told me that her son fell in the playground and had an x-ray at urgent care who said everything was fine, but his arm was still hurting him. I brought a copy of the x-rays to my dad, as bones are not my specialty, and he immediately spotted a very subtle hairline fracture that the urgent care team had missed. He referred my friend to a pediatric orthopedic surgeon and she is forever grateful. Recently, we were at a family dinner in a restaurant and the waitress smelt like cigarette smoke. My dad spent half the meal explaining to her why she should quit smoking, what he has seen happen in smokers' lungs, and how to get help to quit. It is not just his patients who rely on him, it is the whole community.

In October 2020, my dad took on another role. He became a grandfather, a hero to the next generation. We live 5 houses away from him and he sees my 3-year old son and 2-month old daughter everyday. He and my son have the most precious relationship. My dad takes him to school and picks him up when my husband and I are working. They spend the afternoon together, walking the neighborhood to find the trucks my son is obsessed with and having a "cheese party" for lunch where they sample different cheeses. They also play educational games and puzzles. My dad has helped him learn the alphabet and how to count to 100 and they're now learning basic math. Then of course some days, they look at x-rays together and try to "spy" the fractures. My son always comes home from a day with his poppa with a huge smile on his face, so excited to share all the fun things they did together. The quality time they spend together is truly invaluable and I look forward to my daughter and 1-year old niece having the same memories with him.

I urge you to consider all of these anecdotes and the many others you will read about, to understand who my dad is as a person. He is a good man to his core. He has a close family who rely on him everyday and a community who he continues to help endlessly. I beg you to please not take him away from all of us; you would shatter my son's entire world. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,
Rose Weiner-Held, MD